

Intergovernmental negotiating committee to develop an international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution, including in the marine environment.

Bureau meeting

Monday, 15 July 2024

15:00- 18:00 (GMT+3)

Online

MEETING REPORT

Agenda Item 1: Opening of the meeting and adoption of the agenda.

1. The Chair of the INC, Luis Vayas Valdivieso (Ecuador), welcomed members of the INC Bureau and opened the meeting.
2. The meeting was attended by the following members:
INC Chair: Mr. Luis Vayas Valdivieso (Ecuador);
African States: Mr. Ndiaye Cheikh Sylla (Senegal);
Asia-Pacific States: Mr. Hiroshi Ono (Japan); Mr. Mohammad Al-Khashashneh (Jordan);
Eastern European States: Ms. Irma Gurguliani (Georgia); Mr. Harry Liiv (Estonia);
Latin American and Caribbean States: Mr. Gustavo Meza-Cuadra Velasquez (Peru);
Small-Island Developing States: Ms. Asha Challenger (Antigua and Barbuda);
Western European and Other States: Ms. Johanna Lissinger-Peitz (Sweden); Ms. Larke Williams (United States of America).
3. The Secretariat was represented by the Executive Secretary of the INC, Ms. Jyoti Mathur-Filipp; Senior Programme Management Officer, Ms. Brenda Koekkoek; and INC Legal Officer, Ms. Marianna Bolshakova.
4. In attendance for agenda Item 2 (b) were representatives of INC-5 Host Country, Republic of Korea, Ms. Chung Kyung-Hwa, and Mr. Park Minsoo.
5. In attendance for agenda Item 2 (c) were the intersessional co-chairs of the ad hoc intersessional open-ended expert groups, Ms. Kate Lynch, Mr. Oliver Boachie, Ms. Gwendalyn Sisior, Mr. Alex Borchmann and Mr. Luay Almukhtar.

6. The INC Chair expressed his welcome and gratitude, informing members of the Bureau that, in the period since the last Bureau meeting, the Chair's team and Secretariat continued collaborating closely to further advance preparations for intersessional work and towards an effective fifth session of the INC. He highlighted the importance of the shared objective of achieving an agreement for the treaty text in INC-5.
7. During her opening remarks, the Executive Secretary informed the Bureau that the work programmes in the lead up to the in-person meeting of the open-ended ad-hoc expert groups in Bangkok had been published on 10 July 2024. The compilation of draft text of the international legally binding instrument as well as the INC-4 meeting report had also been made available on the INC webpage on 1 July 2024.
8. The meeting agenda was adopted without further additions.

Agenda Item 2: Update on the preparations for the fifth session of the INC.

a. Update by the host country.

b. Logistical update from the Secretariat.

9. Agenda sub-items (a) and (b) were taken up together, in order to allow for holistic discussions on the logistical preparations for INC-5. Representatives of the INC-5 Host Country, the Republic of Korea, and the Executive Secretary provided updates, whereafter the Bureau responded with questions and comments.

Summary of discussions

10. The Republic of Korea informed the Bureau that they were conducting regular meetings with the Secretariat. She provided an overview of the current floor planning for the session which included one plenary room accommodating over two thousand people, two contact group rooms, as well as a room for observers. Should there be a need for a third contact group room, either the plenary or the observer room could be utilized, as the latter could be divided in two to create additional space. The layout also foresees one dedicated Bureau meeting room, seven regional meeting rooms and three additional bilateral meeting rooms. She also explained that a sufficient number of rooms and facilities are secured in the venue to accommodate the meeting needs, as the bilateral and regional meeting rooms could also be used flexibly and effectively.
11. Members of the Bureau thanked the Republic of Korea and the Secretariat. Views were expressed that the regional meeting rooms should not be used for purposes other than regional meetings, as delegations often used these during the day. The need for a dedicated room for the legal drafting group was also raised. With INC-5 being the last session, members highlighted the importance of adequate meeting facilities, room arrangements and time in the venue to accommodate the structure of work required including for ad hoc small to mid-sized-meetings, to further advance and finalize the negotiations.

12. The Executive Secretary informed the Bureau that negotiations on the Host Country Agreement were progressing well, with two meetings and several exchanges of comments having taken place since the last Bureau meeting. Both legal teams are having a constructive exchange and are finding solutions, aiming to have agreement in principle on the whole text by the end of August.
13. The Executive Secretary also informed the Bureau that the Secretariat presented the latest budget figures for INC-5 to donors at the meeting convened by the United Kingdom on 5 July 2024. At the request from members, the Secretariat informed that the presentation will be circulated to the Bureau for information. Regarding travel support for INC-5, the Secretariat was in a position to fund two delegates per eligible country. This is provided from the voluntary contribution of donors to the INC process. The Secretariat will send out the invitations for INC-5 and will open registration over the course of the coming week.
14. Regarding ministerial participation, the Executive Secretary informed that the Executive Director of UNEP intends to send letters to Ministers inviting them to INC-5. The need for ministerial engagement and support at this stage of the process was highlighted. The Chair welcomed the exchange of different views from Members on how to best approach this, considering the possibility of ministerial participation during the final days of INC-5. He expressed that this can be discussed during the Bureau Retreat to decide on the best approach moving forward. The Chair also welcomed initiatives from Member States to organize high-level meetings ahead of Busan. The Secretariat will be coordinating with the Host Country on the best possible approach for the logistics and organization of high-level participation at the fifth session.
15. The Bureau discussed the importance of efficient facilitation of visas, particularly for countries without consular in-country presence. E-visas, visas on arrival, or expedited visa processes were raised as possible approaches by the Bureau. The Host Country indicated that the Republic of Korea did not have e-visas, however the Information Note to participants will be published soon, and a streamlined process for INC participants will be put in place in order to have minimal delays. The Information Note will also contain information on hotel reservations.

Discussion outcomes and follow-up

The Secretariat will circulate to the Bureau the budget presentation made during the donor meeting.

c. Update on the ad hoc intersessional open-ended expert groups.

Summary of discussions

16. The Secretariat provided an update on preparations for the work of two ad-hoc intersessional open-ended expert groups. Their work programmes were published on

the INC website on 10 July. 278 experts have been nominated by Members of the INC to expert group 1 and 363 experts to expert group two. 149 experts were nominated without specific reference to the particular group. Both expert groups will hold three online meetings in advance of the in-person meeting, scheduled to take place from 24 to 28 August 2024 in Bangkok. The first online meeting of expert group 1 will take place on 16 July 2024 from 14:00 to 17:00 Nairobi time, while the first meeting of expert group 2 will take place on 18 July from 14:00 to 18:00 Nairobi time. The first meetings were aimed at setting the scene and addressing the overall proposed modalities of work. The Co-chairs of each group made available to the participating experts the groups' respective work programmes, including several guiding questions to help facilitate discussions during the first meetings.

17. The INC Chair thanked the Co-chairs for their work and the Secretariat for the support. He underlined that the Co-chairs will be leading the work of the two expert groups and invited them to provide an update on the meeting preparations. Co-chairs of expert group 1 informed that the programme of work was developed to ensure close alignment with the intersessional work mandate and to ensure that the intersessional work is useful, having regard to the potential outcomes of the expert group in line with its mandate. The co-chairs also developed several thought-starters for the meetings, and input will also be requested from all nominated experts, including on the in-person meeting in Bangkok.
18. Co-chairs of expert group 2 noted that the first meeting of expert group 2 later that week will also aim to recall the mandate and initiate discussions on expected outcomes and possible approaches in line with the mandate. Three guiding questions for the meeting and a technical questionnaire were circulated to the experts on 10 July 2024. Inputs to the questionnaire were invited by 25 July 2024.
19. The Bureau thanked the expert group co-chairs for their updates. In the ensuing discussion, clarification was made that expert groups meetings were of technical nature, were not negotiating platforms and would focus on information sharing to fulfil the mandate given to them by the INC. The outputs, in the form of the co-chairs' reports, will be forwarded for consideration by the INC. The co-chairs underlined that they will endeavour to produce as much technical input as possible, to support the work of the committee, in line with the mandate of the two expert groups. In addition to the co-chairs' reports, reports on meetings of the expert groups will be prepared by the Secretariat, reflecting the discussions in general terms.
20. The Secretariat informed that any technical resource persons selected by the Secretariat, in consultation with the Chair, pursuant to the mandate given by the INC, would provide information, on request of the co-chairs, to help inform the work of the expert group. Such resource persons will not have any role in the preparation of the co-chairs' reports nor in shaping the meetings of the groups. Some of the intervening Bureau members noted that further suggestions for the organization of the in-person meeting could be discussed during the Bureau retreat in August in which the co-chairs were also invited to participate. In accordance with the mandate given by the INC, no participation by observers in the ad-hoc expert groups was foreseen. The importance of providing information on the work of the ad hoc expert groups and their outcomes, to the extent possible, was underlined.

21. The Secretariat informed the Bureau that invitations to the technical resource persons identified were sent on 12 July 2024, while some were still outstanding. Once all the invited technical resource persons confirmed their interest and availability to support the work of the expert groups, their names and CVs will be made available online. In identifying potential candidates for the technical resource persons, the Secretariat worked closely with the co-chairs to identify required expertise for each expert group based on its respective mandate. The Secretariat received a number of suggestions from Members and observers and it has carried out its own identification of persons with relevant expertise and experience. In the selection process, in addition to expertise, consideration was also given, to the extent possible, to regional and gender balance, as well as to the range of observers in the INC process. The Chair thanked the Bureau, the expert groups' Co-chairs, and the Secretariat for the information provided.
22. Responding to questions raised by the Bureau, the Secretariat clarified that Thailand visas on arrival may be facilitated for the participants of the in-person expert group meetings whose countries did not have Thai consulates. All other participants would need to go through the regular consular process of visa applications.

Agenda Item 3: Planning of the INC Bureau retreat.

Summary of discussions

23. The Executive Secretary provided logistical updates on the Bureau retreat, which will take place at the Environment House in Geneva on 19-20 August 2024. The provisional programme of the retreat is being finalized and will be circulated to the Bureau. Travel itineraries have been already sent to the eligible participants of the in-person retreat.
24. The INC Chair provided an overview of the provisional programme and recalled the shared objective of achieving an effective legally binding instrument. He welcomed input from Bureau Members on elements for an effective organization of work at INC-5, as well as a roadmap leading up to the fifth session. The Bureau Retreat provides an opportunity to share these inputs.
25. The retreat will start at 10:00 on Monday 19 August 2024. The programme was designed to reverse-engineer the preparations for INC-5 based on its desired outcomes. The roadmap to INC-5 was also being drafted in the form of a table, including different meetings, events, and their expectations and outcomes. The roadmap will be shared with the Bureau after the meeting and the Bureau could have its initial discussion on both documents during the meeting scheduled for 12 August 2024.
26. In discussing preparations for the retreat, members of the Bureau considered that, while parts of the meeting could benefit from participation of the expert groups Co-chairs and the persons who facilitated sub-groups at INC-4, some segments of the retreat should be reserved for internal Bureau discussions. With regards to the roadmap, members of the Bureau supported the reverse-engineering approach proposed by the Chair. Some members noted that advance documents and possible guiding questions could be useful to facilitate discussions.

27. Members of the Bureau sought further information on the planning of the potential in-person Heads of Delegation meeting and emphasised that the necessary information and invitations should be circulated as soon as possible. The Executive Secretary informed the Bureau that the meeting could potentially be held in Nairobi for 2-3 days during the week of the 30 September. The dates and venue will be communicated to the Bureau as soon as they are confirmed.

Discussion outcomes and follow-up

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| <p>1) The Chair indicated that the draft Bureau retreat programme will be shared with the Bureau.</p> <p>2) The Chair indicated that a draft timeline/ roadmap to INC-5 with initial reflections from the Bureau, to be discussed during the meeting on 12 August 2024, will be shared with the Bureau.</p> |
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Agenda Item 4: Other matters.

Summary of discussions

27. The Chair provided information on the expected work of the Legal Drafting Group, indicating that an expression of interest to co-chair the group was received from one region. The Secretariat informed that communications on legal experts for participation in the group were still being received and clarified, that, as noted during the previous Bureau meeting, no additional dedicated support was available for participation of legal experts. The Secretariat recalled that this was also consistent with the approach of INCs that negotiated other Multilateral Environmental Agreements where legal experts came from within the existing delegations of Members and that not all Members designated legal experts, given that the legal drafting groups had technical and not negotiating mandates. As noted also under agenda item 2(b), based on the available budget and in line with the existing practice, a total of two delegates per eligible country will be funded to participate at INC-5.

Agenda Item 5: Next Bureau meeting.

28. The INC Chair announced the next Bureau meeting to be held on Monday 12 August 2024, from 15:00 to 18:00 pm Nairobi time.

Agenda Item 6: Closing of the meeting.

29. The meeting closed at 18:50 pm.